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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 27, 1800.

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A SERMON.

2d. CHRONICLES, XV. 7.

BE YE STRONG THEREFORE, AND LET NOT YOUR HANDS BE WEAK: FOR YOUR WORK SHALL BE REWARDED.

THERE was such a peculiar and intimate connection between the civil and religious institutions in the Hebrew republic, that the cause of religion was necessarily and deeply affected, by both the good and bad administration of government. Hence it became a proverb in Israel, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Religion never failed to flourish under the smiles and patronage of wise and pious princes; nor, on the other hand, did it ever fail to languish and decay under the frowns and opposition of unwise and wicked rulers. This in some measure appeared, while the whole house of Israel were happily united in one *civil* as well as *religious* community; but it still more clearly appeared, after the revolt and apostacy of the ten tribes. In the days of Joshua, *Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of*

his increaſe; but after his deceaſe, and while there was no king in Iſrael, the cauſe of religion viſibly decayed, and never revived until the days of David and Solomon. While they were in the adminiſtration of government, they made noble and ſucceſsful exertions to promote the public worſhip of God, and diffuſe a ſpirit of vital piety among all claſſes of people: But after Rehoboam the ſon of Solomon and Jereboam the ſon of Nabat divided the nation, religion received a moſt fatal blow. In the kingdom of Iſrael it was greatly corrupted; and in the kingdom of Judah it was generally neglected. Rehoboam and Abijah were both unfriendly to the cauſe of God, and did much to obſtruct and retard its progreſs. Accordingly, when Aſa aſcended the throne of Judah, he found religion in a low and languiſhing ſtate. *Iniquity had long abounded, and the love of many had waxen cold.* But this deep declenſion, inſtead of weakening, awakened his holy zeal, to revive the ſinking cauſe, which lay ſo near his pious heart. His firſt ſincere and vigorous efforts in favor of religion, were highly pleaſing to the God of Iſrael, who ſent a Prophet on purpoſe to ſtrengthen his reſolution and perſeverance in accompliſhing the good deſign, which he had ſo nobly conceived, and ſo ſucceſsfully purſued. This is the agreeable account, which the ſacred hiſtorian gives of ſome of the firſt acts of his pious and proſperous reign. "So Abijah ſlept with his fathers, and Aſa his ſon

reigned in his ſtead. And he did that which was *right* and *good* in the eyes of the LORD his GOD. For he took away the altars of the ſtrange gods, and the high places, and broke down the images, and cut down the groves: And *commanded* Judah to ſeek the LORD GOD of their fathers, and to do the law and commandments." After he had proceeded ſo far, "The Spirit of GOD came upon Azariah the ſon of Oded. And he went down to meet Aſa, and ſaid unto him, Hear ye me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you. Be ye ſtrong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: For your work ſhall be rewarded." This ſeaſonable meſſage from the GOD of Iſrael, gave new life and vigor to Aſa and all his pious ſubjects. For it is added, "And when Aſa heard theſe words, and the propheſy of Oded the prophet, he took *courage*. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the ſtrangers with them out of Ephraim and Menaſſah, and out of Simeon: *For they fell to him out of Iſrael in abundance*, when they ſaw that the LORD his GOD was with him." In this connection, the words of our text naturally ſuggeſt this animating truth to our preſent conſideration:

THAT the friends of GOD have good ground for unſhaken reſolution in promoting the cauſe of religion.

To ſet this ſubject in a proper light, I ſhall endeavor to ſhow,

I. That reſolution is neceſſary in promoting the cauſe of religion.

II. That the friends of God have good ground to be bold and zealous in promoting ſuch a noble and important deſign.

I. Let us conſider the neceſſity of reſolution in promoting the cauſe of religion.

Resolution is the eſſence of that mental ſtrength, which gives energy to all the powers and faculties of body and mind. It is compoſed of love, zeal and confidence, which are the moſt operative affections of the human heart. When a man has conceived a deſign, which engages his ſupreme affection, which engroſſes his whole attention, and which he firmly believes he is capable of executing, he then feels a ſtrong reſolution to call forth all his latent powers into vigorous exerciſe, to accompliſh the object of his wiſhes. Such reſolution has always had a principal influence in effecting all the great things, which have ever been effected by the men of the world. Equal reſolution, though of a different kind, is no leſs neceſſary in promoting the cauſe of religion, than in promoting any other great and difficult undertaking. Men of piety may have time, and op-

portunity, and learning, and wealth, and power, and influence, to promote the cauſe of truth, and yet never exert themſelves in this great and good deſign, unleſs they poſſeſs a firm and unſhaken reſolution. But all good men, who have this noble quality, are properly prepared to eſpouſe the cauſe of GOD, amidſt a frowning world. Hence the inſpired writers unitedly inculcate reſolution as the principal thing neceſſary, in order to ſucceed in promoting the intereſts of religion. "Be ye ſtrong therefore, and let not your hands be weak," ſays the prophet to Aſa and the men of Judah, who were engaged in this pious and important work. When Jehoſhaphat viſited his kingdom, and diſcovered the prevalence of vice and irreligion, he exhorted the proper reformers, to be *bold* and *zealous* in the diſcharge of their difficult duty. "Behold," ſays he, "Amaziah the chief prieſt is over you in all matters of the LORD; alſo the Levites ſhall be officers before you." But notwithſtanding all this aid and protection, he adds, "*Deal courageouſly*, and the LORD ſhall be with the good." When Shecaniah, a bold and zealous friend of GOD, urged Ezra the prieſt to eſpouſe the ſinking cauſe of virtue and piety, for which he had been fervently praying, he plainly intimated, that reſolution was indiſpenſably neceſſary to effect a religious reformation. "Ariſe, for this matter belongeth unto thee; we alſo will be with thee: *Be of good courage and do it.*"

If we now turn our attention to thoſe, whom God has employed as eminent inſtruments of building up his kingdom, we ſhall find, that a bold and perſevering ſpirit was the moſt prominent trait in their character. Though Moſes was a man of meekneſs, yet he was no leſs a man of firmneſs and reſolution. He feared not the wrath of the king, nor the frowns of his court, nor the murmurs of the falſe and faint-hearted Iſraelites; but boldly purſued the cauſe of God, in defiance to the united oppoſition of all the enemies of the church. Elijah diſplayed peculiar courage and zeal in appearing on the Lord's ſide, and eſpouſing his cauſe, at a time of general, and as he thought, of univerſal declenſion. He not only oppoſed and confounded all the prophets of Baal; but even dared to deliver the meſſage of God to Ahab, whom he knew had been ſeeking his life. It was a firm and unſhaken reſolution, which enabled Nehemiah to carry on and accompliſh the work of God at Jeruſalem, in oppoſition to all the intrigues and threats of Sanballat and Tobiah, and their numerous confederates. For, being admoniſhed to conſult his perſonal ſafety, he nobly replied, "Should ſuch a man as I flee?" What invincible firmneſs did Daniel, Shadrack, Meſhack, and Abednego diſcover, when they maintained the worſhip and glory of the only true God, before the mouth of the lions' den, and the flames of the burning fiery furnace? A

A bold and undaunted ſpirit was the moſt ſtriking lineament in the character of John the Baptiſt, who was ſent as a pioneer, to prepare the way of the LORD. The meek and lowly Jeſus himſelf was the lion of the tribe of Judah. He ſpake with a courage and boldneſs, with which never man ſpake. His undaunted reſolution, in purging the temple, ſurpriſed even his diſciples, until they recollected it was written, "The zeal of thine houſe hath eaten me up." The holy apoſtles imbibed the bold and zealous ſpirit of their Divine Maſter, which rendered them ſuperior to all oppoſition, in ſpreading the goſpel among both Jews and Gentiles. This the enemies of truth moſt ſenſibly felt, and moſt explicitly acknowledged. For we are told, "When they ſaw the *boldneſs* of Peter and John,—they took knowledge of them, *that they had been with Jeſus*. And when theſe two apoſtles were arreſted in their work, they bid defiance to the threats of their malignant oppoſers, and made this ſolemn appeal to their conſciences: "Whether it be right in the ſight of GOD to hearken unto you more than unto GOD, judge ye. For we cannot but ſpeak the things which we have ſeen and heard." Paul, that choſen veſſel to bear the meſſages of grace to thoſe ſitting in the region of the ſhadow of death, was a man of aſtoniſhing reſolution and zeal. He dared the dangers of the ſea, and the perils of the wilderneſs. He attacked the falſe religion

and vain philoſophy of pagan prieſts and moraliſts. He regarded not the terror of tyrants, nor the rage and violence of perſecutors; but boldly declared the whole counſel of GOD. And though his friends frequently adviſed him to avoid the dangers and evils, to which he expoſed himſelf in the cauſe of CHRIST; yet his perſevering zeal and reſolution would not ſuffer him to deſert, nor neglect the benevolent deſign, which he had determined, at all hazards, to purſue. Hear his bold and undaunted language. "Behold, I go bound in ſpirit unto Jeruſalem, not knowing the things that ſhall befal me there: Save that the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, and miniſtry which I have received of the LORD JESUS, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of GOD." Luther was raiſed up to purge away the errors and deluſions of the Church of Rome, and to ſpread the pure truths of the goſpel through many of the ſtates and kingdoms of Europe. This was a moſt arduous and dangerous taſk; accordingly to fit him for his work, GOD inſpired him with a bold enterpriſing, unconquerable ſpirit. This animated and ſupported him, amidſt the greateſt labors and conteſts, that have ever perhaps fallen to the lot of any individual, ſince the days of the apoſtles. As Calvin ſtood next to Luther in

propagating truth in oppoſition to error; ſo next to that great reformer, he poſſeſſed the largeſt ſhare of genuine reſolution and fortitude. But though Zuinglius was a man of more penetration and knowledge, and commanded a more elegant and perſuaſive pen, than either Luther or Calvin; yet, by his great timidity and irreſolution, he often injured the glorious cauſe, which he ſincerely wiſhed to promote. Thus it appears from the experience of ages, as well as from the teſtimony of ſcripture, that a pious and perſevering reſolution is indiſpenſably neceſſary, in order to propagate the goſpel, and build up the kingdom of CHRIST in the world. I now proceed to ſhow,

II. THAT the friends of GOD have good ground for ſuch unſhaken reſolution, in promoting ſuch a great and good deſign. The precept in the text is connected with an animating promiſe. "Be ye ſtrong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: For your work ſhall be rewarded." Here I ſhall mention a few of the weighty motives to bold and vigorous exertions in the cauſe of religion.

1. THE friends of GOD have often been ſucceeded in their ſincere attempts to promote his glory in the converſion of ſinners. He has been pleaſed to allow them the privilege of being workers together with him, in ſtrengthening and

enlarging his ſpiritual kingdom. This privilege they have ſometimes zealouſly improved, when they ſaw religion was declining, and multitudes of ſinners were periſhing in their ſins. At ſuch a time, Aſa ſet himſelf to revive the ſinking cauſe of God. He firſt prepared the way, by removing the obſtacles which ſtood oppoſed to his pious deſign; and then uſed the proper means to awaken the attention of his ſubjects to the things which belonged to their everlaſting peace. In this arduous work he perſiſted for years, and happily ſucceeded in attaining the object of his deſires, his prayers, and exertions. His ſon Jehoſhaphat followed his good example, and carried on the work, which his father had ſucceſsfully begun. After ſeveral wicked princes had reigned over Judah, Jehoiada the prieſt, in the minority of Joaſh, ſtrengthened the things that remained and were ready to die, and, by his vigorous exertions, brought about a great reformation in religion. You remember, that Hezekiah, Joſiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah, were firm and faithful friends of God; and every attempt they made to promote his cauſe was crowned with ſignal ſucceſs. I might mention the apoſtles, Luther and Calvin, David Brainard and many other miſſionaries, who have done much to ſpread the ſavor of Christ's name among both their own countrymen and heathens. So many inſtances of ſucceſs in ſo many ages and parts of the world, in promoting the cauſe of religion,

clearly demonſtrate that the work, though attended with great and innumerable difficulties, is really practicable. And this practicability affords a ſolid ground of encouragement, in undertaking and purſuing the benevolent deſign. There is ſomething extremely animating in the proſpect of ſucceſs. It always inſpires the mind with irreſiſtable zeal and fortitude in ſeeking a deſirable object. This alluring motive, GOD, in his providence, holds up to the view of his friends, who are ſincerely engaged to promote his cauſe.

2. THE promotion of religion is ſuch a noble and laudable deſign, that it is even glorious to fail in the attempt. In all great and difficult undertakings, there is always more or leſs danger of being eventually diſappointed. It is not in man to command ſucceſs, even in his moſt lawful and benevolent purſuits. The men of the world are often fruſtrated in accompliſhing their wiſeſt and beſt concerted deſigns. And the friends of GOD have not unfrequently been diſappointed in their pious efforts to ſpread the knowledge of truth and promote the intereſts of religion. Many ſocieties formed for this benevolent purpoſe, have failed of anſwering their own and the public expectation. But in all caſes, in which the failure has not been owing, either to the negligence, or the unfaithfulneſs, or the deſpondency of thoſe employed, in concerting

and executing the design, their attempts have always met with general approbation and applause. Melvill Horne appears amiable and respectable, notwithstanding his want of success in his mission, and notwithstanding his own acknowledged timidity and irresolution. Some of the more ancient promoters of religion, by their bold, though unsuccessful attempts, endeared their names to future ages. At a time of great degeneracy in Judah, "The spirit of GOD came upon *Zechariah* the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith GOD, why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper: Because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the LORD." This bold and sincere attempt to promote the reformation and salvation of sinners, though it failed of desired success, finally reflected peculiar honor upon the name of Zechariah. For, when CHRIST told the Jews, that the blood of all the prophets should be required at their hands, he mentioned in particular "the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar." CHRIST himself labored in vain and spent his strength for naught, in preaching the gospel to the Jews; but though Israel were not gathered, yet he was glorious in the eyes of his

Father. The apoſtles preached the ſame goſpel in many places, with little or no ſucceſs; but yet they were a ſweet ſavor of CHRIST in them that periſhed, as well as in them that were ſaved. John Wickliff was unſucceſsful in the ſame work in which Luther ſucceeded; but yet his noble, though unſucceſsful exertions, have rendered his name illuſtrious through all the proteſtant nations. If good men ſhould fail of ſpreading the goſpel to the extent of their deſires and expectations; yet their ſincere and vigorous attempts ſhall meet the juſt approbation of both GOD and man. Some ſeem to be backward, to engage in this work, for fear they ſhall not ſucceed. They imagine they ſee a lion in the way; but ſuppoſing there ſhould be a lion in the way, or ſuppoſing the worſt that can be ſuppoſed, that ſome unforeſeen obſtacles ſhall ariſe, which cannot be ſurmounted, it will be glorious to fail, after they have done all that was in their power to do. This the friends of GOD ought to conſider as a ſolid foundation for fortitude and zeal, in undertaking and proſecuting ſuch a noble and laudable deſign, in which they have nothing to loſe, but much to gain, by their moſt zealous and bold attempts.

3. THOSE, who eſpouſe the cauſe of religion, have reaſon to expect the peculiar preſence and aſſiſtance of GOD in their pious exertions. The cauſe of religion is emphatically the cauſe of

God, in the promotion of which his heart is wholly engaged. The zeal of the Lord of hosts centres in the execution of his purpose of grace towards this fallen world. For the attainment of this grand object, he is constantly employing every creature, and directing every event, in the universe. While any of his friends, therefore, feel his spirit and heartily espouse his cause, he must be pleased with the motives of their conduct, and afford them all the protection and assistance which they need, in doing their part, to promote his gracious design. Accordingly we find express promises of his presence with those, who sincerely endeavor to promote his cause. He directed Azariah to tell Asa and the men of Judah in his name, "The Lord is *with you*, while ye be *with him*." He engaged to assist and protect Jeremiah, while pleading his cause, in the midst of the most formidable opposition. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them *all* that I command thee: Be not dismayed at their faces: Lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day, a defenced city, and iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, *for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee*." Ezekiel tells us, that God gave him a similar

promiſe in a ſimilar caſe. "And he ſaid unto me, ſon of man, go, get thee unto the houſe of Iſrael, and ſpeak *my words* unto them. Behold, I have made thy face ſtrong againſt their faces, and thy forehead ſtrong againſt their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be diſmayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious houſe." The command, which CHRIST has laid upon all his faithful miniſters to ſpread the goſpel, is enforced by a promiſe of his continual preſence. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you. *And lo, I am with you alway even unto the end* of the world." Such peculiar promiſes of divine ſupport, protection, and aſſiſtance, apply to all thoſe, who are heartily engaged to ſpread the knowledge and bleſſings of the goſpel among the periſhing children of men, and are deſigned to inſpire them with reſolution and zeal in the great undertaking. Every ſincere chriſtian, every faithful miniſter, every pious and zealous miſſionary, may adopt the language of the apoſtle, and ſay, "I can do all things through CHRIST which ſtrengtheneth me." Whoſe hearts and hands, therefore, muſt not be ſtrong, while they are ſincerely engaged in that work, which they know is highly pleaſing to CHRIST, and in the performance of which,

they have juſt ground to expect his promiſed preſence and protection? Eſpecially when they conſider,

4. That their benevolent deſires and exertions to advance the intereſts of religion, ſhall certainly be attended with the approbation and prayers of all good men. Theſe have univerſally imbibed one ſpirit, and heartily deſire the proſperity of Zion. Here the diſtinction of different denominations ceaſes to operate, and admits an entire union in ſentiment and feeling. Good men, in whatever denomination of chriſtians they are found, unitedly ſeek the ſpread of the goſpel and the prevalence of religion. And though they may differ in opinion, reſpecting particular meaſures to promote the common cauſe of chriſtianity; yet they really unite in the general object, and ſincerely pray, that it may be eventually obtained. They feel the ſpirit of Paul, who ſaid, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and ſtrife; and ſome alſo of good will. What then? Notwithſtanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, *Christ is preached;* and I therein *do* rejoice, yea, and *will* rejoice." The friends of God univerſally wiſh well to, and heartily pray for thoſe, who are ſincerely engaged in ſpreading the goſpel, and promoting the ſalvation of ſinners. Agreeably to the direction of Christ, they daily offer up their deſires to God in that compre-

henſive petition, " Thy kingdom come." And whenever they ſee any ſucceſsfully employed in building up this kingdom, they naturally join with and aſſiſt them in the good work. We have a ſtriking inſtance of this in the context. Though the ten tribes had generally revolted from the true GOD, yet there were ſome pious men among them; and theſe united heart and hand with Aſa the king of Judah, in promoting the cauſe of true religion. Accordingly it is ſaid, " *They fell to him out of Iſrael in abundance, when they ſaw that the* LORD *his* GOD *was with him.*" The ſincere and ſucceſsful promoters of religion will always have the approbation and prayers, and in that way at leaſt, the concurrence and aſſiſtance of all good men. This, indeed, makes them really ſtrong; and ſtrength is a peculiar ſource of reſolution and zeal. Beſides,

5. THEY are equally ſure of the eſteem and affection of all thoſe, whom they ſhall be inſtrumental of converting. Though men are naturally averſe from being awakened, convinced and converted; yet after they have become reconciled to GOD, they never fail to feel a peculiar affection for thoſe whom they view as inſtrumental of their ſpiritual and eternal good. Paul bears teſtimony to the ardent affection, which ſome of his hearers had felt towards him, whom they had viewed as the inſtrument, under GOD, of their ſaving converſion. " I bear you record,

that if it had been poſſible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." How much have faithful and ſucceſsful miſſionaries been beloved and careſſed, by thoſe to whom they have carried the goſpel, which turned them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD? No men in Judah were more ſincerely eſteemed and venerated, than Aſa, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, and Joſiah, who were the happy inſtruments of reforming and converting ſinners. If men are faithful and ſucceſsful in ſeeking the ſalvation of ſouls, they will not only deſerve, but receive the gratitude and eſteem of thoſe, whom they are the means of bringing home to GOD. This conſideration may well ſupport and animate them, in ſuffering all the reproach and oppoſition they may meet with, in ſpreading the goſpel, and taking the ſubjects of the prince of darkneſs out of his hands. I muſt add,

6. THAT all the ſincere endeavors and extraordinary exertions in favor of religion, ſhall finally meet a glorious recompenſe of reward. GOD has promiſed to reward men for the faithful improvement of all their talents. And what better uſe can they make of the bleſſings of providence, than to employ them in building up the kingdom of GOD? This is the moſt important deſign carrying on in this world, and even in any part of the univerſe; and, therefore, to be

inſtrumental in promoting this, is to do the greateſt good, which lies in the power of man to do. No perſon can employ his time, his intereſt, his knowledge, and all the weight of his character, to a better purpoſe, than that of ſpreading the goſpel, and promoting the eternal intereſts of his fellow men; and there is no other way, in which he can ſecure a more ample reward, in the great day of retribution.

But beſide the parable of the talents, we find particular promiſes to thoſe, who make peculiar exertions to build up Zion. Such is the promiſe in the text. "Be ye ſtrong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: For your work ſhall be rewarded." The ſame idea is ſuggeſted by the apoſtle James. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a ſinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and hide a multitude of ſins." The apoſtle Paul ſays to chriſtians in general, "Be ye ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding *in the work of the* Lord, foraſmuch as ye know *that your labor ſhall not be in vain* in the Lord." And the prophet expreſsly declares, "They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars forever and ever." Theſe promiſes of a glorious recompenſe in a future ſtate, ought to animate good men at this day, as they

animated Moſes, the prophets, the apoſtles, and even CHRIST himſelf, to the moſt bold and vigorous exertions in the cauſe of religion.

IT now remains to improve and apply the ſubject, with proper freedom and plainneſs.

IN the firſt place, it is natural to conclude from what has been ſaid, that the friends of GOD *have been very negligent* in promoting his cauſe in the world. When a man, merely for the want of reſolution, does not perform any important work, which belongs to him to perform, and which he has time, opportunity, and abilities to perform, we never ſcruple to ſay, *that he is guilty of negligence.* It is certainly the proper buſineſs of the friends of GOD to promote his cauſe. He formed them veſſels of mercy for his own uſe. He called them out of darkneſs into marvellous light, that they might be "the light of the world, and the ſalt of the earth." And he has commanded them to ſeek the intereſt of his kingdom above every other object. It is, therefore, their appropriate and important buſineſs, to promote the cauſe of religion. And it muſt be acknowledged, that they have long had time, opportunity, and ability, to perform the duty devolved upon them. But have they been faithful? Are there not many indubitable marks of their negligence? Does not the languiſhing ſtate of religion, bear teſtimony to their timidity and indolence? Had they been bold, and zealous, and

active in the cauſe of GOD, would there have been ſo many of the human race, at this day, involved in Jewiſh, Pagan, Mahometan, and Papal darkneſs? Have there not been chriſtians in Aſia? Why then has Aſia been ſo long periſhing for the want of goſpel light? Have there not been chriſtians in Africa? Why then has Africa been ſo long periſhing for the want of chriſtian knowledge? Have there not been chriſtians in Europe? are there not many there ſtill? Why then is ſo great a part of that quarter of the world ſtill ignorant of the pure doctrines of the goſpel? Has there not long been a ſucceſſion of pious men in America? Why then are there ſo many of the aboriginals ſtill periſhing in their native barbarity and ignorance? Have we not many godly miniſters in theſe United States? Why then are there ſo many declining churches, ſo many deſtitute congregations, and ſo many individuals abandoned to vice, irreligion, and infidelity?

THESE are plain indications of negligence in the friends of GOD, for years, if not for ages paſt. Had chriſtians in every age poſſeſſed the ſpirit of the apoſtles and the primitive believers, what great things would they have done to promote the cauſe of CHRIST? Or had they been as wiſe as the men of the world, and as zealous to promote the ſalvation of others, as ſinners are to promote their temporal intereſts, the goſpel would have long ſince been carried to

the ends of the earth. Or, indeed, if the ſame zealous, bold, and undaunted ſpirit, which has lately fired the breaſts of chriſtians in Europe and America, had fired their breaſts but a few years ago, the face of religion would have undoubtedly appeared, at this time, unſpeakably different. Nothing has been wanting, ſince the revival of learning, the invention of printing, and the diſcovery of the magnet, to prevent the univerſal ſpread of the goſpel, but merely chriſtian reſolution and zeal. This long and great negligence calls for the humiliation of chriſtians in general, and eſpecially of chriſtian miniſters and magiſtrates, who ought to have been the firſt in zeal and reſolution to promote the cauſe of CHRIST and the ſpread of the goſpel. The world now looks like the field of the ſluggard, becauſe chriſtians, like the ſluggard, have been crying, "A little ſleep, a little ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to ſleep." The preſent melancholy ſtate of chriſtianity throughout the world, reproaches all its friends for their paſt irreſolution and negligence.

THE next thing to be inferred from what has been ſaid is, that none will ever do much to forward the work of ſpreading the goſpel, without a large ſhare of chriſtian zeal and reſolution. Men may be pious and ſincerely wiſh well to the benevolent deſign, and yet do more to defeat, than to accompliſh it, if deſtitute of a truly miſſionary ſpirit. In order to carry into effect

ſuch a difficult and laborious undertaking, thoſe, who enter upon it, muſt be all awake and alive to the important object before them. But none will feel a proper concern for others, who do not feel a proper concern for themſelves. None will be greatly engaged to promote religion abroad, who are not equally engaged to promote it at home. None have any encouragement to embark in the adventurous cauſe of propagating the goſpel, unleſs their hearts glow with love to GOD, and a tender concern for the ſouls of men. They muſt be weaned from the world; they muſt be ſtripped of mercenary motives; they muſt be willing to deny themſelves and take up the croſs; before they can poſſeſs that firm and perſevering reſolution, which is neceſſary to meet the reproach and oppoſition to be expected, in ſpreading a religion, which has never failed to awaken all the malignant paſſions of the human heart. They muſt ſit down and count the coſt, leſt, after having put their hand to the plough, they ſhould look back, and betray the cauſe, which they engaged to befriend. Why have attempts of this kind ſo often proved abortive? Has it not been chiefly owing to a *worldly ſpirit*, which has palſied all pious reſolution and zeal? And who can expect to ſpeed better, without a better ſpirit? What will lifeleſs meetings, what will proper reſolutions, what will verbal engagements avail, without bold, zealous, perſevering exertions? No perſon is properly pre-

pared to be a member, and much leſs to be a miſſionary, of this ſociety, who has not a heart to ſpend and be ſpent in the arduous undertaking, and to meet all the evils and embarraſſments, which may eventually attend it. A cold heart, a timid mind, a feeble hand, is by no means fit to be employed in a work, which calls for the warmeſt zeal, and the moſt vigorous exertions.

But ſince the friends of God have ſuch good ground for unſhaken reſolution, in promoting the cauſe of religion, we may juſtly infer, in the laſt place, that it is not yet too late to attempt the propagation of the goſpel through this extenſive country. Though we have loſt much time, and neglected many favorable opportunities for ſuch an undertaking; though an awful ſtupor has ſeized the minds of many of the profeſſed friends of God; though the enemies of religion have, within a very few years, greatly increaſed in numbers and ſtrength; though they have ſet every engine in motion, to ſpread error, deiſm, and even atheiſm, through every corner of our land; though, I ſay, all theſe obſtacles ſtare us in the face, and muſt be overcome, in order to propagate the goſpel among thoſe who are periſhing for the want of it; yet it may not be too late to effect the difficult and important deſign. Good men, as well as bad, are able to do almoſt any thing, which they *think* they are able to do. Difficulties vaniſh before reſolution.

There never was so great a declension of religion in Judah, but that a reformation was always effected, when good men had only zeal and resolution enough to attempt it. If the few friends of God in this country, therefore, were only awake, united, and possessed of proper zeal and fortitude, they might, under the divine direction and influence, put a check upon the progress of vice and infidelity, and extend the limits of the Redeemer's kingdom where Satan is now reigning without control, and leading multitudes of poor, deluded creatures to eternal destruction. Christianity is a cause, which is destined to prevail; and which is destined to prevail, by the blessing of God on human exertions.

This we, my Brethren, have in practice professed to believe, by uniting for the purpose of sending the gospel to those, who are perishing for the lack of vision. "Let us be strong therefore, and let not our hands be weak," for we have all the encouragement desirable, to pursue with vigor and fortitude the work, which we have seriously and deliberately undertaken. Though we and others have too long neglected it, and, by our neglect, given rise to great and formidable difficulties; yet these mountains shall become plains, before a pious, bold, missionary spirit. It has been God's usual method, to arise and plead his own cause, at those very times, when it appeared to be on the very point

of extinction. It was when Jereboam the ſon of Nebat had made Iſrael to ſin, and well nigh corrupted the whole church ; that GOD raiſed up Aſa and others, to rekindle the dying, glimmering flame of religion. It was when the two tribes and half were pining away in their iniquities, and reſembled the valley of dry bones, in Babylon ; that GOD awakened the zeal and bleſſed the exertions of his friends, to bring about their converſion and deliverance. It was when the man of ſin had defaced and nearly deſtroyed the chriſtian religion ; that GOD raiſed up a conſtellation of bold and zealous men, to eſpouſe and ſpread his ſinking cauſe. Hence the late extraordinary efforts in Europe and America "*to cruſh the wretch*," or to uſe a more decent expreſſion, *to extinguiſh chriſtianity*, afford a ſtrong ground of faith, that "the time, yea, the ſet time to favor Zion, is come." For it has been GOD's uniform conduct, *when the enemy came in like a flood upon his people, to ſet up a ſtandard againſt him.* And we are happy to ſay, that GOD has already begun to ſet up his ſtandard in various parts of the chriſtian world ; and his friends are now rallying around it, with uncommon zeal and reſolution, to defend and promote the intereſts of his kingdom. An unuſual miſſionary ſpirit has ſpread through England, Scotland, Ireland, many parts of Germany, and a number of the United States. This ought to animate *us*, as it animated the *directors* of the miſſionary ſociety in London. In one of their

communications to the ſociety, they ſay, "From Germany, and a vaſt body of aſſociated miniſters in Luſatia, aſſembled from all parts of Chriſtendom, we have received *the moſt fraternal good wiſhes* for the *accompliſhment* of our deſigns, and their *great ſatisfaction* in our enterpriſe, which has *warmed* and *ſtimulated* them to freſh exertions; while they cry day and night to GOD, *for our ſucceſs*, from the Carpathian mountains to the ſnows of Norway." They add, "America, ſtirred up by your example, has caught the holy flame. So that the LORD JESUS, the great head of the church, ſeems to be awakening a ſimilar ſpirit, *throughout all places* of his dominion." There is yet another promiſing proſpect before us. In the laſt and preſent year, there has been a more extenſive and extraordinary effuſion of the divine influence in many parts of our land, than has been known in the courſe of almoſt ſixty years. GOD is now viſibly ariſing to plead his own cauſe; and ſhall we not, *when we hear the ſound of his goings*, *beſtir ourſelves* to promote the proſperity of Zion? Under all theſe favorable circumſtances, if *we* are not wanting in our zeal, reſolution, and exertions, we have nothing to fear in the purſuit of our great and intereſting object.

WHAT if our number be ſmall? A ſmall number firmly united in ſentiment and zeal, may do wonders in promoting the cauſe of CHRIST.

This has been demonſtrated by thoſe, who firſt carried the goſpel to three quarters of the world.

WHAT if our firſt and feeble efforts ſhould meet with little or no ſucceſs? This, inſtead of throwing us into deſpondency, ſhould ſerve to rouſe us to more zealous and vigorous exertions, in ſuch a difficult and important undertaking.

WHAT if our pecuniary reſources are few, and unprotected by legal authority? There is no ground of diſcouragement on this account, provided we are only faithful and ſucceſsful in the diſcharge of our duty. It is only for GOD to beſtow his grace upon *our* churches, as he did upon the churches of Macedonia, and *our* churches will to their power, yea, beyond their power, abound in the riches of their liberality, and even prayers to receive their gifts, and take upon us the care of miniſtering to the relief of thoſe, who are famiſhing for the bread of life.

WHAT if the miſſionary field be wide? This preſents an animating motive, rather than a diſcouraging obſtacle. The proſpect of the ſalvation of millions ſhould awaken our deſires and endeavors, to civilize thoſe who are not civilized, and goſpelize thoſe who are not goſpelized, through this widely extended continent. The United States are abundantly able, in reſpect to numbers and wealth, to ſpread the goſpel through all North and South America. And we were,

there is reaſon to believe, raiſed up and formed into a civil and religious community, to perform this ſervice for GOD, in grateful return for his diſtinguiſhing and protecting mercy.

BUT where, ſome may aſk, ſhall we find men of a truly miſſionary ſpirit, who will freely ſacrifice their eaſe, their intereſt, their health, and even their lives, to carry the goſpel to the poor in our new ſettlements, and to the ſavages in the wilderneſs? This, we acknowledge, is the greateſt apparent difficulty to be expected and to be ſurmounted, in the buſineſs before us. But this we may ſafely refer to GOD. It is his to provide inſtruments to do his own work. But if the harveſt be plenteous, and the laborers few, it is ours to pray the LORD of the harveſt, to ſend forth laborers into his harveſt. And may we not cheerfully confide in him, who hath formed ſo many miſſionary ſocieties in New-York, Connecticut, and Maſſachuſetts, to raiſe up a ſufficient number of pious, zealous, bold miſſionaries, to carry their pious and important deſign into effect?

BUT let us turn from the dark to the bright ſide of the work, in which we have publicly engaged. What if the ſet time to favor Zion ſhould be at hand? What if there ſhould be a general effuſion of the divine ſpirit upon all our religious ſocieties? What if the attention

of both miniſters and people every where, ſhould be awakened to the object we are purſuing, and they ſhould, like the men of Iſrael, fall in to our aſſiſtance in abundance? What if the numerous inhabitants in the new ſettlements ſhould generally be formed into large and flouriſhing churches? What if the poor heathens ſhould have an opportunity and a heart to embrace the goſpel? In a word, what if this whole continent ſhould be both civilized and goſpelized, through the inſtrumentality of this and other miſſionary ſocieties? Who would not have reaſon to rejoice? And who would have more reaſon to rejoice, than thoſe, who were the moſt ſincere, active, bold, and zealous in bringing about ſuch happy events? Theſe are not imaginary proſpects. If GOD intends to make us a *happy*, he will make us a *holy* people; and if he intends to make us a *holy* people, he will employ the proper means to effect his purpoſe. Let us, then, my brethren, take courage; let our hearts and hands be ſtrong; for there are certainly proſpects within our view, which, whether realized, either before, or after we are laid in the duſt, will abundantly reward us, for all that we can do, to build up the kingdom of our DIVINE REDEEMER.

A BRIEF ABSTRACT

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS AND FUND

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

AN impreſſion of the importance of the knowledge of the goſpel of Chriſt to the preſent intereſts, and eſpecially to the future ſalvation, of men, and a ſolicitude for thoſe portions of the human race which are either partially or totally deſtitute of this knowledge, originated THE MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY. It was inſtituted in 1799 ; and, at its firſt meeting, May 28, in that year, it conſiſted of *thirty-eight* members. Its conſtitution was, ſoon after, publiſhed, with an addreſs to all chriſtians deſirous of the propagation of the goſpel, ſoliciting their ſerious attention to the object contemplated by the ſociety. This object is declared, in the conſtitution, to be, "to diffuſe the knowledge of the goſpel among the heathens, as well as other people in the remote parts of our country, where CHRIST is ſeldom or never preached." A ſmall fund was raiſed by the contribution of the members of the ſociety and of others ; and ſeveral miniſters were choſen to form a miſſion to the frontiers of the United States. Obſtacles prevented the elected miſſionaries from engaging in the ſervice.

The ſucceſs of the inſtitution, however, ſo far as it relates to the acceſſion of members, and an accumulation of the fund, has been fully equal to the expectations of the ſociety. At the annual meeting, on the 27th of laſt May, it appeared, that the whole number of members was *one hundred* and *nineteen ;* and the fund amounts to upwards of a thouſand dollars, and is increaſing both from the annual contributions of its members, and the liberal donations of the pious and liberal.

Encouraged by its augmented reſources, the ſociety, at their laſt meeting, voted to employ four miſſionaries, the enſuing ſummer, to commence a ſerious execution of its deſign. Four ordained miniſters were, accordingly, elected for the miſſion. Two of whom, by direction of the truſtees, are deſtined for the Province of Maine, and two for the weſtern frontiers.

Ought not the ſmiles of the Great Head of the church on the firſt efforts of the ſociety to be religiouſly and gratefully acknowledged as *a token for good ?* Ought they not to ſtimulate chriſtians to afford the inſtitution the concurrent aids of their pecuniary contribution, of their perſonal influence, of their prayers, and of their zealous exertions ? But we are anticipating what does not properly belong to this ſtatement of facts. The motives for giving the ſociety a

prompt and pious patronage are fully exhibited in the subjoined Address. May the perusal of it excite in the bosoms of its readers that spirit of christian philanthropy and charity, which will insure their co-operation in promoting the benevolent purposes of the society, and cause *the blessing of* many *that* are *ready to perish to come upon* them!

JUNE 24, 1800.

OFFICERS.

THE officers of the society, for the ensuing year, are;

Rev. NATHANIEL EMMONS, D. D. PRESIDENT.
Rev. SAMUEL AUSTIN, SECRETARY.
Deacon JOHN SIMPKINS, TREASURER.
Rev. Mess'rs. DAVID SANFORD,
DANIEL HOPKINS,
EZRA WELD,
SAMUEL SPRING,
SAMUEL NILES,
JOSEPH BARKER,
SAMUEL AUSTIN,
ABIEL HOLMES,
JONATHAN STRONG,
} TRUSTEES.

AN

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

MEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS,

THE charitable object of the MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY is the only apology for this friendly addreſs. For, to diffuſe the knowledge of the goſpel among the heathen and other people almoſt deſtitute of it, manifeſtly correſponds with the command of CHRIST, and the benevolence of his diſciples.

ALAS, how dark the moral ſtate of the world from Adam to the Savior! How dark alſo the period from the chriſtian era to the preſent time! For though it is computed that the earth contains *eight hundred millions* of human inhabitants, we find but fifty millions on the proteſtant liſt, and nearly five hundred millions on the liſt of benighted Pagans. Jews, Mahometans, and others, whoſe religious theory is diverſe from the goſpel, compriſe the reſt. The flock of CHRIST has always been ſmall: and Zion ſtill mourns becauſe but few celebrate her ſolemn feaſts.

But, let us pauſe a moment. How long ſhall this dark period of the church continue? Shall the adverſary control the human race till the final conſummation? Is this the decree of the Almighty? We do not thus read the ſcriptures. We rather believe Satan will ſhortly loſe his malignant influence, and that all nations will embrace the Lord Jesus. Remembering then, that Zion's God directs all the revolutions of kingdoms and empires; that the hearts of all men are in his hand, we cannot but thankfully notice the chriſtian charity and zeal which have lately originated and endowed ſo many *Miſſionary Societies*, both in Europe and America, as a precious token for good. To the eye of faith there is, at this revolutionary period, at this birth-day of intereſting events, a peculiar concurrence of divine operations to haſten the promiſed time when *the wilderneſs ſhall bloſſom as the roſe, and the whole world be filled with the glory of ſalvation.* While, therefore, we expect the rapid wheels of providence will ſoon introduce the joyful days of Zion, ſhall not the followers of the lamb gird up their loins and double their diligence? If we wiſh to diſpel the fatal ignorance which broods over the minds of millions of the wretched natives; if we wiſh to arm our infant ſettlements againſt the increaſing powers of infidelity; in one word, if we ſupremely love the glory of God in the ſalvation of ſouls, let us harmonize with the ſpirit of goſpel miſſions: For until the elect

ſhall be gathered, or CHRIST ſhall recal his ſervants from their labors, this command, "*Preach the goſpel to every creature*," will remain in full force. Inſtead of dreaming, like idle men, that there is a lion in the way, let us advance in the name of the LORD, and remove every difficulty, and ſurmount every obſtacle. By perſonal exertions, merely, we can do nothing; but by the gracious influence of the ALMIGHTY we can do all things: For the LORD effects the purpoſes of his grace, not by the wiſdom and power of man, but by the energy of his holy Spirit. If we embrace CHRIST to conduct and ſupport us, we have nothing to fear but our own declenſion. Oppoſition will fly before us, and mountains become plains. Let not the day of ſmall things be deſpiſed.

LET preachers of the goſpel who are beſt qualifiſied for miſſionaries, accept the elevated office, and magnify it from end to end of our extenſive and deſtitute territory. Let our brethren, both in the city and country, who poſſeſs property, poſſeſs alſo charitable hearts, and improve their riches by ſupporting faithful miſſions, till the wilderneſs ſhall bow before the king of Zion: For what qualified miſſionaries can quit their domeſtic and parochial connexions, and ſpend their time, and exhauſt their ſtrength, among the remote ſettlements without incurring heavy expenſe? The laborer is worthy of his hire; and

to ſupport the moſt uſeful miſſions we muſt be furniſhed with anſwerable funds. But the earth is the LORD's and the fulneſs thereof: and we willingly believe that he will open the hearts of rich men and ſpeedily furniſh pecuniary means to erect goſpel churches beyond the Weſtern mountains and lakes, where the periſhing natives are offering ſacrifices to devils. Prayer and pecuniary aid are both neceſſary to carry into effect the noble deſign of miſſionary ſocieties: And is it poſſible for the work to fail while chriſtians pray fervently for its ſucceſs, and men of property love the ſouls of their fellow mortals? How eaſy for a ſmall number of men, who poſſeſs but a common ſhare of property, to ſupport ſeveral miſſionaries from year to year? A thouſand dollars only of goſpel charity will furniſh much bread for ſtarving ſouls in the wilderneſs.

WHILE the ſociety wiſely improves donations, and generouſly rewards faithful miſſionaries, why ſhall not our fund increaſe like a river which is ſupplied by thouſands of brooks and unremitting ſprings? All good men love to do good and to communicate. For it is more bleſſed to give than it is to receive. Let the children of proſperity, therefore, take the advantage of their property, and devote a ſmall ſhare of it, at leaſt, to ornament the temple of ſalvation. Let them give a portion to ſeven and alſo to eight. Money devoted to the miſſionary fund

is ſo much precious property previouſly lodged in the bank of heaven. CHRIST loves and will bountifully reward the cheerful giver. A ſingle cent of goſpel charity in CHRIST's eſtimation, is more valuable than mines of ſilver and gold in the contracted hands of ſelfiſhneſs. Shall we then be remiſs while the ſalvation of thouſands depends on miſſionary exertions? Shall we not commiſerate the vaſt number of children who never ſaw the bible, nor any of CHRIST's miniſters? Shall we be attentive to objects of the leaſt importance, and neglect thoſe of the greateſt importance? Shall we be out-done by the men of the world? Shall the miſer painfully penetrate the bowels of the earth in queſt of glittering duſt? Shall the merchant meet every danger of the elements both at home and abroad, to accumulate wealth? Shall the emulous ſons of ſcience waſte the midnight lamp and even life itſelf to regiſter their names among the literati? Shall Columbus and other navigators quit their native ſhores and explore the globe amidſt all the inclemency of the ſeaſons, and other indeſcribable dangers, to diſcover a new ſpot of land to perpetuate their names? Shall kingdoms and empires be depopulated, ſhall millions of the human race bleed and die to procure the victor's laurel? Shall the greateſt efforts be made and the greateſt ſufferings be endured for nothing, and ſhall we neglect the ſalvation of immortal ſouls? Shall chriſtians be ſurpaſſed in exertions by the chil-

dren of this world? No. Let us then turn the tables and be influenced by the example of enterprising missionaries. Shall the unwearied Jesuits fly from west to east and east to west, thousands of leagues to proselyte the pagans? Shall the benevolent and piously enterprising Moravians explore the northern regions, and bleed and freeze and die to warm and comfort the hearts of the poor heathen, with divine love and grace? Shall *Elliot*, *Brainard* and others of congenial souls forever wear the sparkling crowns which they earned among the native tribes? Shall British christians, at the present day, bear the glad tidings of grace to the other side of the world? Shall all these and many more examples be presented to our view in vain? In one word, Shall CHRIST die to give us an opportunity to promote the salvation of man, and shall we remain indolent and let them be lost forever? GOD forbid. For how, alas, can we escape, if we neglect the means in our power of promoting the great salvation of others? Let us then show ourselves men, and act according to truth. What would be the duty of the heathen were we in their condition and they in ours? Suppose the change to be actually made! suppose them now clothed with gospel advantages, and we destitute. Would it be their duty to bless us? Shall we not then bless them? For the golden rule is divine, and must be adopted in order to meet the solemn process of the great day with consolation.

Bleſſed are thoſe who love the ſouls of others as they ought to love their own, for they will be approved by their Judge. But how ſhall others who neglect to furniſh the deſtitute with goſpel advantages, endure the criterion which CHRIST will finally adopt? For to neglect the ſalvation of ſouls, is to neglect and diſregard the Savior. The faithful only will finally receive the crown of eternal life; but how can men be faithful who knowingly neglect their advantages to ſpread the knowledge of ſalvation among the deſtitute? "Go out and compel them to come in that my houſe may be filled," is the unalterable injunction of divine grace. With this the apoſtles uniformly complied, and were they to reviſit the world, neither the heathen tribes, nor any other deſtitute people would be neglected. Every quarter of the globe, the moſt ſolitary places not excepted, would witneſs the pungent inſtructions of Paul, the burning zeal of Peter, and the divine eloquence of Apollos. Faithful men! ample reward!

Now chriſtian friends and fellow mortals, are theſe things intereſting? The repreſentation we confeſs is manifeſtly inadequate to the object. The one half is not told; but the path of duty is plain to thoſe who are willing to embrace it. The field is wide, the work is great, and the encouragement is moſt excellent. If we ſeek the LORD we ſhall find him; If we devoutly

acknowledge him in our charitable attempt to diffuſe the knowledge of the goſpel, he will guide and ſupport us.

WHILE then the members of the ſociety will punctually and faithfully attend the buſineſs of the annual meeting according to the ſpirit of the conſtitution ; and while the truſtees and miſſionaries, it is hoped, will act anſwerably to the repoſed confidence, ſhall we not expect GOD's bleſſing ? Shall we not experience the charity and realize the liberal donations of Zion's friends who are not members of the ſociety ? Fervent prayers and generous donations are particularly neceſſary to ſupport the cauſe which we advocate. Will a gracious GOD own and bleſs the ſociety, and make it extenſively uſeful to the ſouls of men, and plentifully reward its benefactors, and fill the world with the glory of his great name.